

CLAIMS

1. A method of applying a sender-specific mail policy, the method comprising:

- 5       maintaining a list of computer system users and associated sender-specific mail policies;  
          receiving a mail message intended for further transmission, the mail message indicating a sender thereof;  
          attempting to verify a digital signature in said mail  
10   message;  
          if the mail message does contain a verified digital signature, and if a user corresponding to the verified digital signature corresponds to the sender indicated in the mail message, applying an associated sender-specific  
15   mail policy to said mail message; and  
          if the outgoing mail message does not contain a verified digital signature corresponding to the sender indicated in the mail message, applying a default mail policy to said mail message.

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2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of applying a sender-specific mail policy to said mail message comprises determining whether the mail message complies with said policy;

- 25       if the mail message does comply with said policy, allowing transmission of said message; and  
          if the mail message does not comply with said policy, applying appropriate measures to said message.

- 30   3. A method as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the step of applying a default mail policy to said mail message comprises determining whether the mail message complies with said policy;

- if the mail message does comply with said policy,  
35   allowing transmission of said message; and

if the mail message does not comply with said policy, applying appropriate measures to said message.

4. A method as claimed in claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein said  
5 default mail policy is more restrictive than said sender-specific mail policy.

5. A method as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the step  
of applying a default mail policy to said mail message  
10 comprises rejecting said mail message.

6. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, comprising  
receiving the mail message in a boundary agent, the mail  
message being intended for further transmission over an  
15 external computer network.

7. A computer program product, comprising code for  
performing the method as claimed in claim 1.

20 8. A method of applying a sender-specific mail policy, for  
use in a boundary agent of a first computer network, the  
method comprising:

(a) maintaining a list of users of said first computer  
network, and sender-specific mail policies associated with  
25 said users;

(b) receiving from a user of said first computer  
network a mail message intended for further transmission  
over a second computer network, the mail message indicating  
a sender thereof;

30 (c1) determining whether said mail message contains  
a digital signature, and, if so

(c2) attempting to verify the digital signature; and

(d) if the mail message does contain a verified digital  
signature, and if a user corresponding to the verified  
35 digital signature corresponds to the sender indicated in

the mail message, applying to said mail message a sender-specific mail policy associated with said user.

9. A method as claimed in claim 8, further comprising:

5 if the outgoing mail message does not contain a verified digital signature corresponding to the sender indicated in the mail message, applying a default mail policy to said mail message.

10 10. A local computer network, comprising:

a plurality of user computers; and  
a mail server;

and having a connection to a second computer network, such that outgoing mail messages can be sent from the user  
15 computers to destination computers connected to the second computer network, and such that incoming mail messages can be sent to the user computers from transmitting computers connected to the second computer network,

wherein the mail server maintains a list of users of  
20 said user computers and associated sender-specific mail policies;

wherein, when said mail server receives an outgoing mail message, said outgoing mail message indicating a sender thereof, said mail server attempts to verify a  
25 digital signature in said outgoing mail message; and

if the mail message does contain a verified digital signature, and if a user corresponding to the verified digital signature corresponds to the sender indicated in the mail message, said mail server applies an associated  
30 sender-specific mail policy to said mail message.

11. A local computer network as claimed in claim 10, wherein, if the outgoing mail message does not contain a verified digital signature corresponding to the sender  
35 indicated in the mail message, said mail server applies a default mail policy to said mail message.

12. A local computer network as claimed in claim 10,  
wherein, when said mail server determines whether the  
outgoing mail message complies with said sender-specific  
5 mail policy:

if the outgoing mail message does comply with said  
sender-specific mail policy, said mail server allows  
transmission of said message; and

10 if the outgoing mail message does not comply with said  
sender-specific mail policy, said mail server applies  
appropriate measures to said message.

13. A local computer network as claimed in claim 10,  
wherein, when said mail server determines whether the  
15 outgoing mail message complies with said default mail  
policy:

if the outgoing mail message does comply with said  
default policy, said mail server allows transmission of  
said message; and

20 if the outgoing mail message does not comply with said  
default policy, said mail server applies appropriate  
measures to said message.

14. A local computer network as claimed in claim 10,  
25 wherein said default mail policy is more restrictive than  
said sender-specific mail policy.

15. A local computer network as claimed in claim 10,  
wherein said default mail policy is to reject said mail  
30 message.

16. A computer program product, for use on a mail server in  
a local computer network, said local computer network  
further comprising:  
35 a plurality of user computers; and having a connection  
to a second computer network, such that outgoing mail

messages can be sent from the user computers to destination computers connected to the second computer network, and such that incoming mail messages can be sent to the user computers from transmitting computers connected to the  
5 second computer network,

wherein said computer program product causes the mail server to maintain a list of users of said user computers and associated sender-specific mail policies;

wherein, when said mail server receives an outgoing  
10 mail message, said outgoing mail message indicating a sender thereof, said computer program product causes said mail server to attempt to verify a digital signature in said outgoing mail message; and

if the mail message does contain a verified digital  
15 signature, and if a user corresponding to the verified digital signature corresponds to the sender indicated in the mail message, said computer program product causes said mail server to apply an associated sender-specific mail policy to said mail message.

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